

Route 1

Milton Abbas & the chalk downs

Tucked away in the chalk downs...

Classic Dorset Downs country - much loved by Thomas Hardy and still as alluring and atmospheric today. With intimate chalk stream valleys and wide open windswept downs, it feels like time has stopped still here.

But this ride doesn't dwell on Hardy's lifetime – the chalk has been a big draw for 1000s of years and there's a much deeper story to tell. You can tick off remnants of ancient farming, an abbey, Capability Brown landscape, medieval estates and even the birthplace of the trade union movement. This is an eclectic slice of Dorset history ... exercise for the mind as well as the body!



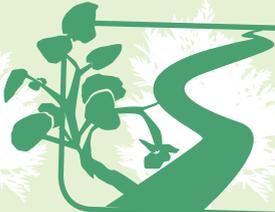
Come back to Athelhampton House in November for our annual Dorset Food & Drink Christmas Fair.



Look out for the cherry orchards – home to Dorset Cherries and their delicious juice.



Weatherby Castle iron age hillfort is easy to miss – covered in trees, there's even an 18th century obelisk hiding in there.



The chalk rivers Piddle and Frome are renowned for their watercress beds.

CHALK AND CHEESE?

We'd love to say that these chalk downs are a great cheese making area but actually it's better at producing beef and barley! The light, well drained soils make it perfect for crops like barley, which have probably been grown here on and off for 6000 years - originally for food but now malting for beer.

This is also the perfect place for rearing West Country Beef and Lamb. With long growing seasons and wildflower rich grass, the quality of meat from these downs is worthy of this international recognition.

SPARKLING DORSET

Wine is the surprise product from this area – call in at the award-winning Langham vineyard to find out how the champagne varieties of grape fare on the chalk!

VILLAGES ON THE MOVE

Milton Abbas seems like a quintessential English village with beautiful walks taking in the picturesque abbey, lake, chapel and pub. But look again – its uniform streets of thatch & cobb houses were relocated from a nearby valley in the 1770's to make a better view for the local dignitary. Enjoy this Capability Brown landscape and England's first ever new town!

TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS

Visit the museum or village trail to follow the lives of the Tolpuddle Martyrs and how their struggles triggered the rise of the trade union movement in the UK in the 1830s.

PIDDLE OR PUDDLE?

The river Piddle passes through Tolpuddle and Puddletown but it is said these villages were renamed by the Victorians who thought the name Piddle a little unsavoury! Chalk rivers are one of the rarest habitats in the world for wildlife – there are 3 chalk rivers and their numerous streams in the Dorset AONB.

DISTANCE: 17 miles

-  Eat & drink
-  Great view
-  Farm shop
-  Steep bit
-  Your route
-  NCN route



EAT THE VIEW

- 1 ATHELHAMPTON HOUSE**
Spectacular C15th Manor house and gardens, serving teas, coffees, lunch and Sunday lunches on Sunday. athelhampton.co.uk
- 2 JUST GOOD STUFF**
Farm shop on a 15 acre farm selling groceries grown or reared in Dorset. justgoodstuff.net
- 3 LANGHAM ESTATE**
World-class sparkling wine in a 30 acre vineyard, solely planted with the classic Champagne varieties. langhamwine.co.uk

- Suppliers only
- 4 CHERRY PICKED HAMPERS**
Unique hampers packed full of tasty treats including local cherry juice! cherrypickedhampers
 - 5 FROM DORSET WITH LOVE**
Award-winning artisan preserves, made with love. fromdorsetwithlove.co.uk
 - 6 GINGER VIKING**
Handmade cordials for water, spirits, wines and cocktails made by the Ginger Viking himself! gingerviking.co.uk
 - 7 SAM'S FUDGE**
Handmade fudge made in a variety of flavours, perfect for gifts or a special treat. samsfudge.com
 - 8 ANDREW JAMES CATERING**
Bespoke catering using a huge selection of local produce. andrewjamescateringsolutions.co.uk

Full list of Dorset Food & Drink members can be found at dorsetfoodanddrink.org



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Before you set off, check detailed maps & updates at dorsetfoodanddrink.org